



Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka
Ministry of Women and Child Affairs

Constitution of Women Action Society

For office use only

District	
DS Division	
GN Division	
Name of Women Action Society	
Registration Number	
Date of Registration	

Acronyms

GBV	Gender-based Violence
GN	Gramma Niladhari
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Child Affairs
WAS	Women Action Society
WDO	Women Development Officer
WDFA	Women Development Field Assistant
Women's Bureau	Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka under the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs

1. Introduction

Women Action Society (herein after called “WAS”) is a legalized organization established under the Women’s Bureau of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (herein after called “MoWCA”). WAS is established in each Gramma Niladhari (herein after called “GN”) levels to empower women and ensure their rights and dignity.

2. Mission

WAS has a mission to contribute to the process of national development and to create a better society by empowering women and ensuring rights and dignity of women by enhancing cooperation between members and other related actors. To achieve the mission, there are four pillars to promote by the activities of WAS.

I. Capacity Building

Provides opportunities for members to develop their capacities for promoting economic and social wellbeing, including livelihoods and health of the members and community. WAS members help and benefit each other and acquire resources outside for developing their capacity. WAS members manage and utilize all the resources for the wellbeing of all the members.

II. Networking

Creates a good networking place where everyone can support each other and feel safe to discuss their challenges. The networking will also help WAS to have a

collective power for their economic, social and political activities. It also works well with the government entities such as Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka, Women Development Officers (WDOs)/Women Development Field Assistants (WDFAs) and District/Divisional Secretariat, and all the other stakeholders including non-governmental organizations for the development of the society.

III. Gender Equality

Challenges the all forms of harmful gender norms, patriarchal beliefs and gender-based violence (GBV) to create a society where everyone can have a full range of choice and live safely. It also empowers women and girls and promotes male engagement for women's equal participation in all aspects of their life. WAS promotes the respect and dignity of women and enhance their power of decision-making, accessing to resources and achieving their targets in their lives.

IV. Inclusive Society

Initiates making a society where everyone can live, work and learn actively without being discriminated and/or left behind due to their backgrounds including gender, disability, language, religions and others. It also contributes the society to sustain peace and resilience. WAS expand the value of embracing all the diversities for developing a society.

3. Functions

The primary functions of WAS are as follows;

- (1) Discuss and support each other for capacity development of members including teamwork, leadership, networking, decision-making, health, mental/physical wellness, safety, business/entrepreneurship and others.
- (2) Promote gender equality in the community by addressing existing harmful gender norms, creating opportunities for discussion/awareness raising, empowering women and girls, and encouraging male engagements.
- (3) Women Development Officers/Women Development Field Assistants should be informed about the activities of WAS and these should be carried out under the supervision of the WDO/WDFA.
- (4) Support each other for members who are facing social challenges such as poverty, family issues, health issues, GBV and others.
- (5) Promote economic activities including livelihood activities, business, entrepreneurship and employment of women in the region.
- (6) Develop partnership with various actors in order to promote economic activities and access to the market and value chain.

- (7) Initiate local events such as religious/cultural celebration days in the community and encourage members to participate for better team building and wellbeing of the participants.
- (8) Discuss with the community members outside of WAS including men to make more gender equal society and promote women's voice to be heard.
- (9) At least two officers from one WAS, namely the president, secretary and treasurer must attend the meetings of the Divisional Women Federation and participate in the activities of District /Divisional federations and active participation should be provided whenever necessary.

4. Membership

- (1) All women who are over the age of 18 years and living within the above GN Division shall be eligible to obtain membership.
- (2) Ability to confirm residence within the relevant Grama Niladhari Division.
- (3) To obtain a membership, applicants shall submit an application and entrance fee to one of the Office Bearers and acquire an approval from the Working Committee.
- (4) The amount of the entrance fee shall be decided by the General Meeting in a range of Rs. 20 (Twenty rupees) to 100/= (Hundred rupees). Entrance fee shall be submitted to the Treasurer and the receipt shall be submitted.
- (5) The amount of the monthly membership fee shall be decided by the General Meetings in a range of Rs. 20 (Twenty rupees) to 300/=(Three Hundred rupees).

5. The Cancellation of the Membership

In the situations below, the membership of the particular individual shall be cancelled.

- (1) Moving out from the GN Division permanently. But she is eligible to join a new WAS in her next GN Division.
- (2) When residence cannot be confirmed within the relevant Grama Niladhari Division.
- (3) Failing to pay membership fee for over 03 months
- (4) Death or voluntary withdrawal
- (5) Failure to attend 03 consecutive monthly meetings without reasonable notice, either verbally or writing.
- (6) When a member is involved in misconduct that harms the was, their membership will be revoked and they will not be allowed to join that was again.

6. General Meeting

The General Meeting shall be held once a year. The General Meeting shall consist of all the members. The quorum of the General Meeting shall not be less than 2/3 members, .

Topics below should be discussed in the meeting but not limited to;

- Minutes of the previous meeting
- Action Plan (progress, to do, activation plan, communication etc.)
- Financial/Account progress
- Membership status (absent members etc.)
- Common matters (upcoming festival, funerals, disaster and other emergency)
- Economic activities (business, entrepreneurship, local market fair etc.)
- Other issues and challenges
- Schedule of next meeting and upcoming events

7. Working Committee and Office Bearers

The elected Office Bearers consist a Working Committee. The meeting of the Working Committee shall be held at least once a month and whenever necessary to discuss matters in preparation for the General Meeting. (The working committee members would be eleven, five office bearers and six other members.)

The responsibilities of Office Bearers shall be as follows;

(1) Chairperson

- Chair the General Meeting and Working Committee meeting;
- Authenticate all the minutes of meetings and other report;
- Represent the WAS and ensure the proper implementation of activities in accordance with the constitution; and
- Be responsible to the communication and reporting to the WDO/WDFA and Divisional Secretariat.

(2) Vice-Chairperson

- Support the Chairperson for proper management of her responsibilities; and
- Supplement the role of the Chairperson whenever she is absent.

(3) Secretary

- Prepare minutes of General Meeting and Working Committee meetings;
- Prepare attendance sheets, log entries and progress reports;
- Maintain the list of registered members;
- Ensure that all the necessary documents are maintained either in English, Sinhala, or Tamil convenient for the WAS; and
- Keep those documents and records safe and appropriately.

(4) Assistant Secretary

- Support the Secretary for implementing her responsibilities; and
- Supplement the role of the Secretary whenever she is absent.

(5) Treasurer

- Record the any financial transactions on the receipt/account books and a cash book;
- Restore the petty cash and financial documents safe and appropriately;
- Deposit all money exceeding the authorized limit for petty in the bank account of the WAS;
- Collect membership fees and entrance fees;
- Prepare annual budget for the authorization by the Working Committee and General Meeting: and
- Respond to the divisional audit annually.

(6) Six other Committee Members

Other 6 members of WAS shall be appointed as the Committee Members by the General Meeting.

(7) An internal auditor shall be appointed from either the member of WAS or externally.

She/he shall have knowledge about the financial management of WAS and give necessary advice and monitoring to the WAS activities.

(8) An advisor shall be appointed to the Working Committee. She/he is an official. The Divisional Secretary or the Divisional Secretary of the relevant jurisdiction shall delegate authority to appoint a Women Development Officer or Women Development Field Assistant in offices where there is no WDO.

8. Election of the Working Committee members

Eligible persons for the posts of the Working Committee shall be selected by the election at the General Meeting. The term of office of these posts shall be one year.

Rules of the election shall be as follows;

- (1) The election shall be conducted annually within 03 months of the completion of one year of the term of office.
- (2) Members can recommend herself or can be recommended by others to be a candidate.
- (3) To be a candidate, one must have completed one year of membership in a WAS registered with Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka.
- (4) The total number of terms that can be held is 03. The maximum period that a position can be held at one time is one year.
- (5) If any member has held President, Secretary or Treasurer for three times, she shall not eligible to apply for the same post and a person can only hold the same office for two terms. However, she can contest for any other post of the committee.
- (6) Only one person per family shall be selected as Office Bearers.
- (7) Vote shall be by a secret ballot for the WAS with more than 20 members. For the WAS with less than 20 members, either secret ballot or other method like hand raising is

acceptable. A candidate obtained the majority of the vote shall be selected. Counting the votes shall be conducted under the authorization of the Divisional WDO/WDFA.

- (8) Only members with more than 06 months of membership can vote. Whole election process shall be conducted with approval from the Divisional Secretariat. The election shall be witnessed by the Divisional WDO/WDFA. The Divisional WDO/WDFA will report the result to the District Secretariat and Women's Bureau in a written document.
- (9) All the information of the election (date, time, venue and candidates) shall be informed to all the WAS members by the Working Committee at least a week before.
- (10) After the election, all the relevant documents for WAS shall be handed over in writing to new Office Bearers in presence of the WDO/WDFA.

9. Funds

Funds of WAS contain the followings;

- (1) Entrance fee and monthly payment
- (2) Aids and donations received from the government, foreign agencies, non-governmental institutions or individuals
- (3) Funds disbursed as loans
 - *In case of introducing a loan scheme, Office Bearers shall make sure the members have an adequate financial knowledge related to loan. The terms and conditions shall be submitted to Women's Bureau through WDO/WDFA. The interest rate on that loan scheme should be kept at a level that is affordable to the member, above the commercial interest rate.
- (4) Interests from loans
- (5) Including income generated from projects related to women's development carried out in collaboration with government and non-government institutions.
- (6) WAS can obtain contracts. However, the Divisional Secretary must be satisfied that the qualifications required for that purpose have been met.
- (7) Funds received through any other means in compliance with the Constitution

The funds may be utilized to fulfill the financial requirements of the WAS, through introducing different methodologies such as group purchase or quick loan. To conduct these matters, sub committee is being appointed by the working committee. The funds shall only be utilized/not utilized for achieving the mission of WAS as a group, but not for individuals, such as;

- Welfare activities in the community including religious/cultural events, funerals and others;
- Necessary programmes for the development of the knowledge and skills of the members;
- Economic and livelihood development activities;

- Responding to emergency situations such as natural disaster;
- Purchasing necessary equipment and tools;
- Transportation cost to participate in District/Divisional Federation meetings;

*Only the actual amount using public transportations shall be disbursed from WAS fund. In case the meeting place is more than 05 km away from the usual WAS meeting point, advance payment is allowed. In either case, proof of payment such as receipts shall be submitted to the Treasurer and stored.
- Providing quick loan to the members

10. Budget and Accounting

- (1) At the beginning of the year, treasurer shall present the budget to the Working Committee. The WAS will discuss and finalize the budget in a General Meeting, then it shall be submitted to Divisional Secretary for the approval.
- (2) The Treasurer shall, with the approval of the Working Committee, manage the revenue/expenditure and bank account of the society.
- (3) WAS can maintain only one account in a valid central bank approved bank. Except the approved petty cash, all money should be deposited there. The Treasurer should manage all receipts/disbursements of the WAS and maintain the account of the WAS with the approval of the Working Committee. Additional accounts should not be opened and maintained for depositing the money received by the WAS in the name of the welfare or in any other name.
- (4) Petty Cash up to the approved amount can be managed. Treasurer take responsibility of keeping the cash in safe and recording any transactions on the cash book. The maximum amount should be determined by each WAS but cannot exceed Rs. 10,000/=.
- (5) The Treasurer shall duly maintain the record of cash transactions on a cash book. The budget shall be reviewed in the Working Committee meetings every month.
- (6) The accounts and transactions of the WAS are audited at the end of every year by the Accountant of the Divisional Secretariat. Annual audit of the society is mandatory.
- (7) If the WAS fails to hand over the financial records such as the receipt book, bank book, petty cash book, receipt books, etc., to the divisional secretary at the end of the year, the work of the WAS may be temporarily suspended for 03 months. The Director of the Women's Bureau can dissolve the committee if it fails to submit the relevant financial report during the period of suspension. During the period of suspension, the committee cannot receive any grants from the Government or other institutions.
- (8) The authority for signing cheques for disbursements is assigned to the Treasurer and Chairperson or Vice-chairperson.
- (9) The Treasurer shall be responsible for obtaining and issuing receipts in respect of each financial transaction.

(10) All the accounting record should be in written form, and monthly report should be submitted to the Divisional Secretariat.

11. Political Activities

WAS promotes the empowerment of women in all aspects of life in a society, it includes the female representation in politics. Therefore, WAS encourages women to participate in political activities, however, it prohibits WAS to be utilized for political activities of any specific parties or individuals.

- (1) The funds and meetings of WAS cannot be utilized in favor of any political activities or campaigns by any parties or individuals.
- (2) In case a member of WAS run for any local elections or elected as a member of a local politician, that member cannot be the member of the Working Committee. When she is already one of the Office Bearers, that position shall be vacant and covered by the other member of the Committee until the end of the term. If a member has been elected as a member in any local government, provincial council or parliamentary election, she cannot hold office but can remain as a member.
- (3) However, it doesn't prohibit WAS to get support from political authorities for economic and social wellbeing of the members. However, the political authority should not be involved in the monthly meetings/elections of the WAS.

12. Registration

To register WAS, documents as follows shall be submitted to the Director, Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka after holding at least 2 General Meetings within 2 months. The minimum number of members in a WAS shall be 20.

- (1) A copy of the Constitution certified by the Secretary and the Chairperson by placing their signatures to the effect that it has been adopted at the General Meeting. [Annexure I]
- (2) Minutes of the General Meeting for registration which contains the records on the election of Office Bearers. [Annexure II]
- (3) The renewal of the registration certificate after every election shall be done by the Divisional Secretary.
- (4) The information of the elected officers and the meeting report of the General Assembly should be sent to the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau for approval.

Only one WAS can be established in one Grama Niladhari Division. If there is a need to establish more than two WASs in one GN Division, a request letter shall be submitted to the Women's Bureau by the WDO for approval, detailing the area of the Division, the number of

women above 18 years, transportation difficulties etc. When an existing WAS splits into two or more, the funds of the original WAS shall be distributed to the new WAS in proportion to the number of members.

- Criteria for considering a WAS inactive
 1. Failure to hold monthly meetings for 03 consecutive months .
 2. Despite meetings being held on a monthly basis, the number of members is not quorate.
 3. Failure to attend monthly meetings of the Divisional Federation for 03 consecutive months without notice.
 4. Cash books, ledger entries and bank account information are missing.
 5. Failure to obtain membership in the Divisional Women's Federation.

13. Others

In other special circumstances and exceptions, including amendment, reorganization, and cancellation of WAS, the District/Divisional WDO/WDFA shall submit explanations and reasons and obtain the approval of the Director of Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka.

Annexure I

Adoption of the Constitution of Women Action Society

The above Constitution was adopted at the General Meeting held on _____ (date) with the participation of _____ (number) members.

Honorary Chairperson

Date:

Honorary Secretary

Date:

Bank Account

Bank Branch:

Account Number:

Current Balance:

Honorary Secretary

Honorary Treasurer

I inform you that the information of the above Women Action Society in the Grama Niladhari Division no. _____ are accurate and recommend that it is suitable for registration.

Women Development Officer

Divisional Secretary

Official Seal

Annexure II**Minutes of the General Meeting for Registration**

1. District :
2. Divisional Secretariat Division :
3. GN Division and Number :
4. Name of the Women Action Society (WAS):
5. If the WAS has been registered under the Women's Bureau before,

Its number:

6. Names of Office Bearers

Designation	Name	Address	Phone #	Signature
Chairperson				
Vice Chairperson				
Secretary				
Assistant Secretary				
Treasurer				
Committee Member 1				
Committee Member 2				
Committee Member 3				
Committee Member 4				

Committee Member 5				
Committee Member 6				

The election of Office Bearers was conducted on _____ (date) witnessed by _____ (WDO/WDFA's name).

*List of Members shall be attached with name, address, phone number and signatures.

7. Adoption of the Constitution

The Constitution was proposed and agreed by the member of WAS and WDO/WDFA.

8. Entrance and Monthly Membership Fee

- Entrance fee of Rs. _____ was proposed and agreed.
- Monthly membership fee of Rs. _____ was proposed and agreed.

9. Other points discussed

For Inquires:

Women's Bureau of Sri Lanka

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